

Christian Community

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Community Change Challenges Chicago's Kenwood-Ellis Church

By George N. Nishimoto

"If the Church had done something soon enough, it wouldn't be struggling for its life now in a dying community." These were the challenging words of a layman who had seen the Land Clearance Project take giant bulldozers and literally chase out 30,000 residents from a slum area only to crowd them into our already overcrowded community and threaten to turn this area also into a slum.

The fact that housing in Chicago was facing critical shortage, and that public housing developments were being thwarted on political and racial issues, and that no planned relocation of the uprooted slum residents had been made were obvious factors in the problem of North Kenwood-Oakland, where at least seven Protestant churches were

located. Then to have the bulk of 30,000 people dumped into this community called for emergency measures and practical solutions. The fact that these were Negro residents "threatening" a proud white population complicated matters.

Because the Churches chose to remain aloof from this problem, they found themselves in the compromising position of sanctioning racial discrimination, supporting legal blockades against the intrusion of Negroes, crossing the constitutional line of restrictive covenants, and comforting the members caught in housebombings and aggravated assaults.

The Church found itself unable to keep its members from moving out of the community, and while faithful mem-

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There Are Needs To Be Met

No thoughtful person looks at the inner city without being conscious of its great need. Here more people live in one house than in one ordinary block. Here the economic, social, moral and spiritual needs of people are accentuated. Here live, for better or worse, many of the people who are shaping the future of America. Needless to say, most of our churches with resources have taken their flight "to more desirable locations." But people, God's people, are still in the city, and their needs must be met by those who would do God's will. The story of the Kenwood-Ellis Community Church is a demonstration of how one church is seeking to meet the needs of people in its community.

Another area of need facing the nation is providing leadership in changing communities and relationships, particularly in the area of race relations. It is our hope that the suggestions in these pages will aid our church people to develop more effective programs in inter-group relations. This is not only a national problem but a world problem, and Christian people are challenged to provide constructive leadership so that our actions might more nearly conform to God's will.

The least known group in America is the Indian American. Their lives have been filled with legend, but they are real people with real needs. It is hoped that this year as the churches study the Indian American as their national missionary emphasis, we will learn more about these early Americans, and will identify ourselves with their needs and struggles for a better life.

There are needs in every community. What is your church doing to discover and meet those needs?

GREETINGS

Starting with this issue we mark the transition from the *Christian Reporter*, the social action news sheet published by The Women's Guild, to participating with members of the Commission on Christian Social Action in their publication *Christian Community*. There has been a great deal of publicity about this changeover on The Women's Guild pages in *The Messenger*, in the 1956 Christian Social Action letter of the Kit and in the *Christian Reporter* itself.

Many local Women's Guild Christian Social Action chairmen sent in the postcard enclosed in the Christian Social Action envelope of the Kit and with this issue begin their subscription to *Christian Community*. However, it is important that all women of the Evangelical and Reformed Church be encouraged to subscribe to this valuable paper which is published monthly except July and August.

From time to time I will be integrating important legislative matters and other news with that of the Commission on Christian Social Action. It is wonderful to greet you in this manner, not only as chairmen of the Christian Social Action department of The Women's Guild, but more especially as a contributing member of *Christian Community*.

Let's urge folks to subscribe by displaying *Christian Community* on tables at Women's Guild meetings. It is important that we be informed.

—Evelyn Henzel, Christian Social Action Chairman, The Women's Guild

Community Change

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bers travelled in from the suburbs to attend and support their church, it was not long before they followed their children to their neighborhood church and eventually dropped out from their original church.

To further complicate matters, five to eight thousand Japanese-Americans wedged their way in between the overflowing Negro population and the vigilant white residents. They had come from confined Relocation Camps immediately after the war years as self-conscious, embarrassed, introverted people who wanted to forget their terrifying experience during the war.

Quite accidentally, more by the grace of God than the wisdom of men, the Evangelical and Reformed Church began the Ellis Community Center Church to minister to the Japanese Americans as a Special Project of the Board of National Missions.

As the ministry progressed, it took on the problems not only of one group of people, but the gigantic problems of the entire community.

It dared to take on to its staff Negroes to demonstrate to the entire community its conviction, and it was able to attract Negro members to enter into a church building that had never before allowed non-white to enter its portals and share the responsibilities to effect its Christian program. This was happening while other churches in the neighborhood refused to serve these newcomers, the lonely and the lost; they chose to close their doors and stood almost defiantly against the changing trend which they could neither control nor stop.

The Church served its parish by visiting families trapped in the substandard housing conditions and lifting the veil of incognito, bringing in its place a sense of being wanted, a new sense of belonging. It provided a nursery school for children whose mothers were unable to provide happy experiences in play. It started classes in English for the forgotten "foreign-

ers". It offered opportunities of social fellowship in creative activities for adults who lived as strangers often in the same apartment. It took children off the streets with an intensive program of friendship clubs and group activities. It attracted teenagers with a busy schedule of recreation and education. It opened its large gymnasium to the entire community, and offered its facilities to every community group. It housed the North Kenwood-Oakland Community Conference and helped organize over 500 families in Block Clubs to combat the problems of delinquency, crime, adequate police protection, regular garbage collection, better lighting and improved housing. It won the cooperation and support of other institutions in a joint program of community conservation. It mobilized the leadership, the intelligence, the resources, the best within the community, and brought them to bear on the problems of their community.

All this the Church was able to do because it loved God, and its neighbor as well. When a Christian Church dares to love as Christ would want it to, then its ministry may take unorthodox paths and different forms, but it will bring the Good News of hope to the hopeless, comfort to the socially stricken, peace to the restless and love to the unlovely. Indeed the Church can and must be the transforming power in the lives of men and communities. It can never remain content feeding from the charity of its membership, reflecting only the desires and hopes of its contented few, but it must always hold to the standard of Jesus Christ and courageously follow His example. It must face community changes not with fear but with evangelism, seizing opportunities to witness for Christ instead of spending all its effort in trying to preserve its organization and structure. It should lose itself in the trials and tribulations of its community and thus find its God-given purpose and power.

Communities will continue to change while the families of our nation move about in a restless search for peace and new opportunities, but the Christian Church need not succumb in this change. It can help to mold the new community, and build a new fellowship . . . all the while winning new followers to Christ and proving to the entire world that God is sufficient unto our need.

What Needs Face Indian Americans?

To preface the stating of apparent needs, it is our conviction that all church action or concern for the Indian American should be for both those on the reservations and those off the reservations.

A. Education—

1. More extensive education for children and youth, including both vocational and academic training, giving special attention to the educationally disadvantaged Indian children.
2. A strong adult education program for training in all aspects of life — health, economics and sanitation—by tribal, state, and federal governments.
3. Improvement of both private and public education programs to an accepted standard in educational requirements, this to include school, housing, teachers, and equipment.

B. Health—

1. Improvement of health services and programs to a level of accepted medical standards.
2. Closer coordination between public and private agencies serving health needs of Indian people.
3. Implementation of professional services with health education programs by and among Indians, initiated or encouraged by church mission and other private agencies.

C. Economy—

1. Protection, conservation, and full use of land presently in Indian ownership.
2. A broader and more rewarding economic base to assist Indians in impoverished conditions.
3. A solution to the problems of heirship lands, acceptable to the tribes involved.
4. Development of industries on and near reservations, specifically, utilizing natural resources in the area.
5. Creation and encouragement of home industries on reservations.
6. Recognition of the proposal made by Indians themselves through national organizations (National Congress of American Indians; National Fellowship of Indian Workers; Indian

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SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTION

Adopted by the Executive Committee of the Department of Racial and Cultural Relations of the National Council of Churches

The decree of the U. S. Supreme Court of May 31, 1955 for the implementation of the decision of May 17, 1954 regarding segregation in the public schools recalls the statement issued by the General Board of the National Council of Churches on May 19, 1954. In recognizing the complexity of making the changes called for, the National Council said:

To put the decision into effect will test the goodwill and discipline of people in many communities. Adjustments will be more difficult in some localities than in others. In the period of transition from one pattern to another (whatever the length of the period to be prescribed by the Court), we know that the churches and individual Christians will continue to exert their influence and leadership to help the authorized agencies in the several communities to bring about a complete compliance with the decision of the Supreme Court. The law of neighborliness is the great guide available to Christians as they deal with this situation in their local communities. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The second part of the Great Commandment contains the potential for lifting men to a new level of social responsibility and for creating new dimensions of human brotherhood.

The many statements supporting the elimination of segregation in the public schools, issued by local churches, denominations and other religious bodies, also set forth the complexity of making the changes called for by the decrees of the Supreme Court.

The May 31, 1955 decision places the primary responsibility for dealing with school desegregation and integration upon the school authorities in the local community. Implicitly the decision emphasizes the necessity for churches and individual Christians to exert their influence and leadership to help authorized agencies and individuals in the several communities to bring about complete compliance with the decisions of the Supreme Court in a spirit of good will and neighborliness.

To achieve this it is suggested that:

1. Denominations alert their local churches as to the important role that the churches have in creating a climate of opinion and in building channels of communication which foster democratic processes, free discussion of the issues involved, understanding, creative action and goodwill.
2. Denominations and councils of churches encourage the formation of action-study groups in each church.
3. Denominations, ministers' conferences, councils of churches and church women encourage the formation of community-wide action-study groups which include representatives from all of the churches.
4. These action-study groups should—
 - A. Secure the facts about the situation in the local schools and make these facts available to all people in the community.
 - B. Make available other information about desegregation and integration in the public schools, such as books, pamphlets, posters, films, film strips and recordings.
 - C. Discuss, formulate and evaluate concrete proposals for action which are based upon Christian principles as well as upon available facts and information.
 - D. Keep in communication with other community agencies and public officials regarding the issue.
 - E. Cooperate actively with other community agencies and public officials in efforts to influence public opinion and to encourage constructive decisions on the part of school boards and school administrators.
 - F. Work to enable the churches to use public discussion, newspaper publicity, radio programs and similar means of communication to counteract rumors and propaganda which are blocking democratic processes.
 - G. Issue statements, hold conferences and public meetings dealing with the issues of desegregation and integra-

Court's Decision— Why Comply?

The following reasons for complying with the Supreme Court's decision on segregation are found in an article in the October, 1955 issue of THE NEW SOUTH, entitled "No Legal Escape from Desegregation" by Guy H. Ranson, professor of Christian ethics at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky:

1. The Court performed the kind of function for which it was created by the United States. It was created that we might have a final Court of Appeals and a highest authority for interpreting the meaning and application of the constitution and the laws of the land.
 2. The Supreme Court based its ruling in the segregation cases upon the express words of the Fourteenth Amendment, and its ruling concerning that Amendment soon after its enactment.
 3. Disagreement with the ruling of the Supreme Court is not sufficient grounds for defying the Court, because its rulings are binding upon all citizens.
 4. The Supreme Court rulings are consistent with Christian and democratic principles.
 5. The Supreme Court rulings are not contrary to the will of the majority of Americans.
 6. The people who took the segregation cases to the Court were not seeking to stir up trouble, but were seeking an interpretation of the law from the highest authority in the land. They used proper channels as provided by law. Those who are nullifying the Court are the trouble makers, because they appeal not to the Courts as provided by law, but to prejudice and bigotry.
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- tion in the local community.
- H. Encourage ministers to discuss the issues involved in sermons and speeches.
 - I. Work with adults, parents, youth and children in the church to interpret the meaning of desegregation and integration in the schools.

Indian Americans

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Rights Association, 1505 Race Street, Philadelphia, Pa.) for a federally enacted and financed resources development program, i. e., a program similar to the "Point IV" technical assistance programs granted to underdeveloped countries.

D. Leadership—

1. Morally and technically qualified Indian and non-Indian leadership adequate to meet the needs of the people served; it is the conviction that such leadership would bear strongly on the motivation of and assistance to Indians to do those things which lead toward a more abundant life. Employment of sound methods for motivation of Indian people to self betterment. Removal of psychological block of inferiority.

What Should Be Our Goals?

1. To secure more generous support of Indian missions;
2. To increase the program of evangelism and spiritual nurture in order that they may develop toward spiritual maturity;
3. To work for the extension of opportunities for self development in all avenues of life;
4. To work for the extension of all benefits now available to American citizens in housing, medical care, public services;
5. To increase the socio-political-economic learning opportunities for Indian Americans toward full participation in American community life to the ultimate and that integration shall enrich American society as well as the lives of the Indians themselves;
6. To uphold the basic concept of the nation as trustee as long as trusteeship exists.

The church has the responsibility not only to serve the needs of the Indian people as they exist but always to press toward the treatment of the causes of social distress.

The Reverend George N. Nishimoto, pastor of Kenwood-Ellis Church, Chicago, contributes our feature article this month. The remainder of this issue has been prepared by the Race Relations Secretary.

News and Notes

Race Relations Sunday

The Department of Racial and Cultural Relations of the National Council of Churches has prepared instead of the usual race relations packet a brief message, written by Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, President of the Council, entitled "Christ's Challenge—The Church With The Open Door." This message is followed by helpful suggestions to aid the churches in developing more effective brotherhood programs. It is the plan of the department to carry its brotherhood emphasis throughout the year. We commend this message and suggestions for the study and use of our churches.

Principle and Practice

The Louisville Conference of the Methodist Church adopted a report saying that racial segregation has no place in the Church, then went on record in favor of keeping the Central Jurisdiction a segregated division to which only colored members belong.

Kansas

Five Kansas first-class cities report complete school integration as the fall semester ends. The eight other first-class cities have begun processes of desegregation.

Court

With the single word "affirmed" the Supreme Court on November 7 made clear that its May 17, 1954 decision on the unconstitutionality of racial segregation in public education extends to public beaches, parks, and golf courses. The cases involved bathing facilities in Maryland and the Bobby Jones Golf Course in Atlanta, Georgia.

Washington, D. C.

Washington's experience in mass desegregation has confounded some of the pet dogmas of the race relations experts. One, long held to be cardinal, is that the larger the proportion of the minority race involved, the greater the degree of difficulty in effecting desegregation, and yet in Washington Negro students constitute a majority. A second dogma is that a gradual approach to desegregation creates less friction than an abrupt one. But the changeover in this Southern city was accomplished by a series of giant steps completed last September.

Christian Conscience

In a number of Southern communities "citizens councils" have been organized to bring economic pressure upon those who work for racial justice. No Christian can in good conscience support movements which seek to curb freedom of expression by robbing their victims of the means of life. This practice is not in keeping with our heritage of freedom and liberty. It is a denial of love and our Lord's teaching of neighborliness.

Reading Suggestions

1. **THE RIGHT OF EVERY CHILD**—The story of the Washington, D. C. program of school integration, published by the American Friends Service Committee, 20 South 12th Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

2. **STATEMENTS ADOPTED BY RELIGIOUS GROUPS**, compiled by the Dept. of Racial and Cultural Relations, National Council of Churches of Christ, 297 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, New York.

3. **ANSWERS FOR ACTION**, Southern Regional Council, 63 Auburn Avenue, N.E., Atlanta, Georgia. This pamphlet contains excellent helps for those seeking practical constructive ways to act in public school desegregation. (20c per copy)

4. **SOUTHERN SCHOOL NEWS**, published monthly by the Southern Educational Reporting Service, P. O. Box 6156 Acklen Station, Nashville, Tenn. A factual report of happenings in the schools of the South.

5. **PREJUDICE AND YOUR CHILD**, by Kenneth B. Clark, is a careful analysis of how children acquire their prejudices, the harmful effects on all children, with practical suggestions for action for parents, community groups, schools, and churches. (The Beacon Press, Boston, Massachusetts, Price \$2.50).

Integration

Most of our church related colleges are integrated. Life on their campuses has been enriched with the coming of Negroes and other minorities. It is believed that campus association is one of the finest ways of creating racial understanding.

Aid

At a recent meeting of the General Board of the National Council of Churches of Christ, in Omaha, Nebraska, Church World Service funds were made available to meet the distress needs of those who suffer because of their fight for racial justice.

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